

PARENT CORNER

VISION PROBLEMS AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE When Vision Disorders Are Treated, Children's Schoolwork Improves

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Approximately one out of four children has vision disorders that impair learning. Parents and teachers are often unaware of the problem because the child can read the 20/20 line on an eye chart. Unfortunately, how well children see at 20 feet has little to do with their vision at reading and learning distances (10-16 inches from the face). Vision goes beyond eyesight and involves receiving, pro-

pointing at different places on the page. The result is blurred, scrambled, or double vision. These children can also be highly distractible, finding it difficult to concentrate because the eye-strain is so great. Other symptoms include losing place as the print "swims," fatigue, headaches, and frustration.

• **EYE TRACKING** is required to follow a line of print. When reading, children with tracking problems can experience jerky and inaccurate eye movements resulting in loss of

Does your child or student display any of the following symptoms?

- Avoids close work like reading
- Complains of blurred or double vision
- Closes or covers one eye
- Confuses similar words
- Consistently performs below potential
- Has difficulty copying from the board or book
- Has difficulty with geometric forms
- Has difficulty spelling words and remembering and/or understanding what is read
- Becomes disorganized and frustrated when studying visual information
- Has eye-hand and eye-body coordination problems resulting in awkwardness or clumsiness
- Fatigues quickly when reading
- Frequently loses place and skips words or whole lines of text
- Frowns or squints while reading, writing, working at the chalkboard, or watching television
- Suffers from headaches (especially after reading), nausea, or dizziness unrelated to known illnesses
- Holds head close to the book when reading or close to the table when writing
- Has persistent letter or word reversal after second grade
- Rubs eyes
- Has sloppy handwriting
- Turns or tilts head to one side (to use one eye only)
- Is unable to sit still; cannot stay on task for long

place, skipped or transposed words, and poor copying skills. They have trouble with comprehension because of difficulties in moving their eyes accurately and often use their finger or a marker to help keep their place.

• **FOCUSING** is seeing clearly during reading and quickly shifting focus when looking from near to far (desk to board). Print becomes progressively blurry for children with focusing problems the longer they

cessing, and understanding visual information. Vision is learned like walking. However, unlike walking, vision development generally proceeds without parent awareness. Because of developmental differences, no two people see exactly alike.

Visual skills are important to academic success. Dysfunctions in one or more of these skills can hinder a child's ability to learn.

• **EYE TEAMING** is one of our most important visual skills. Our eyes are designed to work together, but each eye functions and records images independently. Each eye must aim at exactly the same point for the recorded images to be identical, allowing the brain to combine them for clear single vision. When the eyes do not aim together, the recorded images are different and cannot be combined. Reading and comprehension become increasingly difficult for children with eye teaming problems. Their eyes tire, float apart, and end up

read. They sometimes hold their books close to their faces or lay their heads down.

• **ESOPHORIA**, the tendency for the eyes to turn inward, causes children to see things as smaller than they actually are. To see an object properly, children bring it closer; eventually, the head is buried in a book.

• **FORM PERCEPTION** is needed to determine similarities and differences among shapes, colors, and sizes. If children cannot perceive and copy simple geometric forms, they will not understand the wiggly lines that make up letters, words, and sentences.

• **VISUAL MEMORY** is the ability to immediately recall characteristics of a given object or form. This skill helps children remember what they read and see by processing information through short-term memory. Children with poor visual memory struggle with comprehension, have difficulty remembering what a word looks like, or fail to [continued page 18]